

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY DAKAR
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AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 104

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TAGS: ECON ELAB IS SF
SUBJ: HISTADRUT FOCUSES ON AFRICA AND BREAKS SOUTH AFRICAN
TRADE RELATIONS

REFS: A. 77 TEL AVIV 10829 (NOTAL); B. 77 TEL AVIV 10946
(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: HISTADRUT AFFILIATED BUSINESSES ARE NOW WITH-
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DRAWING FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND ALL ISRAELI PERSONNEL
HAVE BEEN RECALLED. A HISTADRUT OFFICIAL WILL SOON VISIT
A NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO SOUND OUT THE CURRENT
ATTITUDES OF AFRICAN LABOR AND POLITICAL LEADERS TOWARD
ISRAEL IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.

1. DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE HISTADRUT INTERNATIONAL

DEPARTMENT ISRAEL HERZ, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AFRO-ASIAN RELATIONS, TOLD LABATT JANUARY 3 THAT THE HISTADRUT HAS NOW TERMINATED ITS SOUTH AFRICAN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES, ALL OF WHICH WERE JOINT VENTURES, AND THAT KOORTRADE AND KOORSTEEL REPS HAVE EITHER LEFT OR ARE LEAVING SOUTH AFRICA. MESHEL HAD EXPLAINED THIS DECISION TO MEANY DURING THE AFL-CIO CONVENTION. HE HAD ALSO DECLARED AT THE SAME TIME THAT, GIVEN ISRAEL'S ISOLATION AND SUBJECTION TO A BOYCOTT IN WHICH MANY COUNTRIES--INCLUDING SOME OF ISRAEL'S FRIENDS--PARTICIPATE, AND GIVEN ISRAEL'S LEGITIMATE CONCERN FOR THE FATE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, THE CUTTING OF TRADE AND FINANCIAL TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA WAS UNTHINKABLE. HOWEVER, UPON HIS RETURN TO ISRAEL MESHEL REVIEWED HISTADRUT'S RECORD OF OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID AND WAS PERSUADED BY THE ARGUMENT THAT IN THE LIGHT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S WORSENING RACIAL POLICY, HISTADRUT-LINKED ORGANIZATIONS MUST REFRAIN FROM FURTHER DEALINGS WITH THAT COUNTRY.

2. HERZ ALSO TOLD US THAT HE PLANS TO TOUR AFRICA IN FEBRUARY IN ORDER TO FEEL OUT CURRENT SENTIMENT TOWARD IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. HE PLANS TO VISIT KENYA, TANZANIA, ZAMBIA, NIGERIA, GHANA, IVORY COAST, SIERRA LEONE AND POSSIBLY SENEGAL. HE SAID THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN HAD EARLIER REJECTED
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MESHEL'S REQUEST THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SUPPORT THE HISTADRUT CAMPAIGN TOWARD MAINTAINING AND REINFORCING RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES. REPORTEDLY DAYAN HAD ARGUED THAT HE CONSIDERED SUCH EFFORTS AS WASTEFUL AND FELT THAT IF AND WHEN THE TIME CAME AFRICANS WOULD OFFER TO RENEW DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE HISTADRUT IS TRYING TO DO. LATER DAYAN MET WITH HERZ, WHO WAS A FELLOW OFFICER IN THE PALMACH, AND REITERATED HIS DOUBTS ABOUT THE USEFULNESS OF THE PLANNED TRIP TO AFRICA, BUT THEN SAID THAT HE APPROVED IT AND THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD ASSUME THE EXPENSES.

3. HERZ REALIZES THAT HE IS IN NO POSITION TO INFLUENCE AFRICAN DECISIONS ON WHETHER OR WHEN TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. HOWEVER, HE HAS LONG STANDING PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH MANY AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE, AND THINKS THAT THE LINKS WHICH THE HISTADRUT HAS ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED WITH VARIOUS AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL PAY OFF. HE GAVE AS AN EXAMPLE THE GROWING ACTIVITIES OF THE HISTADRUT AFFILIATED KOOR TRADING COMPANY, KOOR INDUSTRIES, AND THE SOLEH BONEH CONSTRUCT-

ION COMPANY THROUGHOUT AFRICA. HE CITED A MAJOR CONSRUCTION PROJECT IN TOGO, WHERE THE ISRAELIS ARE BUILDING A CEMENT FACTORY. HERZ ALSO COMMENTED THAT MANY AFRICAN LABOR AND POLITICAL LEADERS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CYNICAL ABOUT ARAB AND COMMUNIST EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE THEM. HE MENTIONED A CURRENT WFTU DELEGATION TOURING AFRICA, ARRANGING TRADE UNION SEMINARS AND GETTING A RATHER MIXED RECEPTION. HE ALSO CITED IMPROVED HISTADRUT RELATIONS WITH THE GHANA TUC, DESPITE HIS SUSPICION THAT ITS SECRETARY GENERAL ISSIFU AND AFRICAN TRADE UNION CONGRESS SECRETARY GENERAL DENNIS ACCUMU IN ACCRA ARE ON THE LYBIAN AND SOVIET PAYROLL. LEWIS

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